



10293 Bloomfield Street • Los Alamitos, CA 90720-2200
 (562) 799-4700 • FAX (562) 799-4712

Jerry Friedman, Ed.D.
 Director of Safety and Student Services

August 18, 2023

The Honorable Maria Hernandez
 Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
 700 Civic Center Drive West
 Santa Ana, CA 92701

The Los Alamitos Unified School District (District) commends the Grand Jury for its time and attention devoted to studying this very important issue and publishing the Grand Jury Report dated May 25, 2023, entitled: *The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County* (Report). The District is committed to serving all students and recognizes that there are unique challenges facing children and families experiencing homelessness and challenges for our District and our school personnel devoted to identifying and serving these students and families.

The District has thoroughly reviewed and considered the Findings and Recommendations in the Report. In accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury has requested that the District respond to Findings and Recommendations made in the Report.

Please see below for the responses to each required Finding as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury report and attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

F #	Finding	Agree/ Disagree	Response And Explanation (if Required)
F1	Many children experiencing homelessness are not identified as such, and therefore do not receive the support and benefits authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los Al Unified uses the Aeries Data Confirmation process to complete the mandatory housing questionnaire at the beginning of every school year. School sites and the District Office also have hard copy options for families that do not have online access. When families are identified, the school site, teacher, and district liaison are given the information. Families are notified about their rights and supports. The District also identifies students as McKinney Vento throughout the year - all new students complete the housing questionnaire upon initial enrollment, and teachers and other staff are encouraged to notify the Office when they hear a family has become homeless.

F2	The lack of mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training of school site office staff, counselors, and teachers contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los Al Unified provides training for school office staff (registrars, attendance clerks, counseling support staff) as well as site administrators, teachers, counselors, and health clerks/nurses at the beginning of each school year. Additionally, identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness occurs on an as-needed basis throughout the school year.
F3	There is disparity in the application of McKinney-Vento regulations across Orange County public school districts which results in unequal access to educational benefits for children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Based on my observations, the application of McKinney Vento regulations is consistent across Orange County public school districts. The disparity is in the number of children experiencing homelessness in each district. Districts with higher numbers of children experiencing homelessness typically have access to more community supports and resources.
F4	The majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons are in full-time positions, but because their work includes multiple non-McKinney-Vento responsibilities, most do not have sufficient time to do the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Although I have many other responsibilities, because of the District's low number of students experiencing homelessness, I have sufficient time to complete the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.
F5	Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	I have been in the same role for five years. I know several districts that have consistent McKinney-Vento liaisons; however, there are also some districts that have a high turnover rate.
F6	McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	Although training is not mandatory, I attend trainings offered by OCDE. It seems like the majority of school districts send representatives to the trainings.
F7	Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an elementary district often do not continue to receive McKinney-Vento benefits when they move to a high school district because the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Because the District is a unified school district serving grades TK-12, the District does not have firsthand information regarding this finding and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding.
F8	McKinney-Vento funds depend on school districts submitting grant proposals, but not all districts have employees trained in writing grant applications, resulting in missed funding opportunities.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los Al Unified allocates funding to sufficiently meet the needs of our students identified as McKinney Vento. Because of our low number of students experiencing homelessness, we have not

		right for explanation)	applied for any grants.
F9	School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefiting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los AI Unified allocates funding to sufficiently meet the needs of our students identified as McKinney Vento. Because of our low number of students experiencing homelessness, we have not applied for any grants.
F10	McKinney-Vento is an unfunded federally mandated program; however, school districts which qualify and apply for Title I, Part A funds may obtain revenues that can be used for children experiencing homelessness. These funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the school districts supporting children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los AI Unified allocates funding to sufficiently meet the needs of our students identified as McKinney Vento.
F11	A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Los AI Unified provides transportation, at no cost, to any student experiencing homelessness who is in need of this service. The District uses its own buses, OCTA Bus Passes, and, when needed and as appropriate, Hop/Skip/Drive, to transport students.
F12	Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socio-Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	Students identified as homeless in Los AI Unified have about a 10% higher chronic absenteeism rate than all students and socio-disadvantaged students.
F13	Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	The small number of students identified as homeless in Los AI Unified does not constitute a significant student group for comparison. Additionally, the small number of 12 th grade students identified as homeless in last year's graduating class all met high school graduation requirements.
F14	The percent of Homeless Students graduating who failed to meet state standards on English Language Arts and Math tests is significantly higher than it is for All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	The small number of students identified as homeless in Los AI Unified, at various grade levels that may or may not participate in state standardized testing, does not constitute a significant student group for comparison.
F15	There is a tendency by school districts to operate in isolation, which prevents productive collaboration on addressing the issue of children experiencing homelessness and the	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with	OCDE offers the HOPES Collaborative and multiple other networking and collaborative meetings at which District McKinney Vento liaisons can share ideas

	challenges of their education.	the finding (see right for explanation)	and information to improve their respective programs for McKinney Vento students and families.
F16	A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	Los Al Unified agrees that there is a significant lack of affordable housing in Orange County.

Please see below for the responses to each required Recommendation as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury report and attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

R #	Recommendation	Implementation	Response And Explanation (if Required)
R1	All Orange County school districts should develop a "Back to School" plan which includes mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training for all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	Training will be provided using Keenan and OCDE Resources. This has been done yearly and this year's training will be completed by December 31, 2023.
R2	Participation in Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) McKinney-Vento Act training programs for all Local Education Agencies (LEA) McKinney-Vento Liaisons should be mandated by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	As we have done in the past, Los Al Unified will send the McKinney-Vento Liaison to all OCDE training programs. This will be completed prior to October 1, 2023.
R3	Given that most LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for a number of other duties, and do not have sufficient time to do their McKinney-Vento required work, school districts should identify ways to increase support and/or staff to address the numerous tasks of the Liaisons by October 1, 2023.	Recommendation will not be implemented (see right for explanation)	The current staffing allocation is sufficient to meet the needs of the students identified.
R4	By January 1, 2024, for children experiencing homelessness to receive uninterrupted McKinney-Vento benefits, Orange County school districts should add a section to their mandatory enrollment school form enabling parents/guardians to give permission for their school to share information regarding their child's McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	Although FERPA and Ed. Code allow districts to share student records, this will be clarified by January 1, 2024.
R5	By October 1, 2023, each Orange County school district should develop and maintain a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants to assist	Recommendation will not be implemented (see right for explanation)	Current resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the students identified.

	in educating children experiencing homelessness.		
R6	By October 1, 2023, a joint task force should be formed by the OCDE comprised of a district-level administrator from each Orange County school district and leadership from non-profit organizations who serve homeless families, to address absenteeism, low test scores, and low graduation rates of children experiencing homelessness.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	Los AI Unified will send a representative to join the county task force.
R8	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students.	Recommendation requires further analysis (see right for explanation of scope, parameters, and 6 month timeline of analysis)	Los AI Unified will analyze the attendance of our students experiencing homelessness to determine if there is a need for further action. Currently, all students with attendance challenges participate in School Attendance Review Team meetings to identify barriers to attendance and to develop action plans for improvement (inclusive of additional school resources and support). Students are also referred to SARB Hearings and the Boys and Girls Club Truancy Mediation Program; this information will be shared with the Board of Education by May 1, 2024.
R9	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to improve the performance of homeless students in English Language Arts and Math.	Recommendation requires further analysis (see right for explanation of scope, parameters, and 6 month timeline of analysis)	Los AI Unified will analyze the ELA and Math data for our students experiencing homelessness to determine if there is a need for further action. Currently, all students with academic challenges are provided with additional resources and interventions to support their needs. Additionally, all school sites annually develop goals and action plans to address achievement and opportunity gaps evident in state and local student achievement data; this information will be shared with the Board of Education by May 1, 2024.
R10	The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should provide information from the School Accountability Report (SARC) to the Board of Supervisors identifying the number and describing the performance of children experiencing homelessness in Orange County public schools. This data should include the aggregate of students in each district who are experiencing homelessness, their chronic absenteeism rates, and the high school graduation rate, and the percent who meet or exceed state standards in English and Math,	Recommendation will not be implemented (see right for explanation)	Not applicable to Los AI Unified.

	starting October 31, 2023, and yearly thereafter.		
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Please accept the information provided herein as the District's responses to the Orange County Grand Jury's Factual Findings and Recommendations in the Report. Once again, we appreciate the time and attention that the Grand Jury devoted to this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Jerry Friedman, Ed.D.
Los Alamitos Unified School District
Jfriedman@losal.org
562-799-4700 ext. 80412